



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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Chair Gelser-Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services:

The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) strives to have internal grievance and investigation processes that are accessible, transparent, and thorough, and to provide youth external resources as well. We appreciate any and all efforts to create environments and avenues that support these goals.

This letter is meant neither to support nor oppose SB 1159, but rather provide context.

There are five avenues for youth in OYA custody and their families to share or report concerns. Two are internal OYA processes:

- filing a grievance
- report to the Professional Standards Office

Three are external:

- work with the OYA-contracted Lewis and Clark Youth Legal Clinic
- reach out to Disability Rights Oregon
- contact a personal attorney (or, when available, the youth's juvenile court-appointed attorney)

OYA understands and appreciates the value of having an additional individual outside of our agency who advocates and is a resource for youth as is proposed in SB 1159. While we were not involved in conversations on this bill prior to its filing, we are eager to come to the table and engage with the legislature and others about how a Children's Advocate might be implemented in the most effective and efficient manner. We would love to see solutions that reduce confusion, avoid duplicating efforts, and minimize the potential for reviews/investigations to collide.

Above all, we want to make sure to get any proposed legislation right so youth in OYA custody continue to have access to robust internal and external reporting resources. Youth should be assured of the best practices of coordination and collaboration as well as independence and oversight.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Martin
Legislative Coordinator, OYA